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ABSTRACT

This program description and evaluation outlines the first year of operating ADAPT (Alternative Direction for Adjustment and Personal Training), an interdisciplinary four-hour daily approach to "total education" for behaviorally/emotionally handicapped high school students. It describes the program's curriculum, which provides a values orientation to the individually tailored academic, vocational, interpersonal, and field education courses. After describing the program's background, philosophy and purpose, the paper discusses: student identification and placement; staff characteristics; classroom management; parent participation; curriculum and class credits; counseling services for students, teachers, and families; and administrative considerations. The report favorably evaluates the program both subjectively and objectively. Subjectively, it surveys faculty, administrators, parents, and students; objectively, it compares data for attendance, suspensions, and disruptive incidents. (LJS)

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ADAPT: ALTERNATIVE DIRECTION FOR ADJUSTMENT AND PERSONAL TRAINING

Gilbert Public Schools
Gilbert, Arizona

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I. ADAPT: ALTERNATIVE DIRECTION FOR ADJUSTMENT AND PERSONAL TRAINING

The ADAPT program features the direct and indirect participation of counselors and school psychologists in an interdisciplinary approach to providing a "total education" for behaviorally/emotionally handicapped students. Gilbert High School has recognized the need for a fresh innovative approach to educating many of it's students-students for whom more traditional approaches have proven inadequate. Many of these students, despite possessing at least average potential, have experienced behavior problems, attendance difficulties, emotional difficulties, attitude problems, loss of motivation or other similar difficulties. It is for these select students Gilbert High School offers an alternative, individually designed program: ADAPT (Alternative Direction for Adjustment and Personal Training).

The ADAPT program consists of a four hour block of time, from 8:30-12:30 daily, during which students receive educational, vocational, interpersonal, and field education. One pervasive aspect of the program is the "values" orientation of constant instruction. The specific curriculum, tailored to the individual student's needs, is jointly developed by teachers, counselors, psychologists, administrators, students and parents. The individual student's educational plans are designed to include the broadest and most relevant range of experiences possible. The students earn high school credit on a contract basis while participating in the program. Students may earn as many as 5 credits annually for their participation in the ADAPT program, and may also enroll for certain restricted classes outside of the program (e.g., work experience, vocational classes, etc.). Services are also provided to the parent and families of ADAPT students.

When considering students for the ADAPT program, many factors are considered - previous test information, teacher recommendations, parent recommendations, types of difficulties encountered and the students genuine need of the program. These recommendations are formally presented to parents, with the accompanying rationale and purpose. Participation in the ADAPT program is subject to parent approval - no student will be placed in, or removed from the program without written parent authorization.

The ADAPT program is viewed as a means rather than an end. The program provides students with an intensive and structured opportunity to make a sensible commitment to schooling with the goal of reintegration. Whenever possible, reintegration procedures are enacted. Provisions regarding establishment of need, philosophy and purpose, student identification and placement, personnel consideration, curriculum overview, administration consideration and program evaluation are provided.

II. ADAPT: Program evaluation

Evaluation of the ADAPT program, completed at the end of the first year of operation, indicated improved student attendance, improved student and parent attitudes toward school, and reduced incidence of disruptive incidents. Recommendations for future implementation are discussed.

BACKGROUND AND NEED

As Special Education services were previously provided, all areas of exceptionality were served together in special classrooms. Learning disabled, emotionally handicapped, educable mentally handicapped, etc. were educated together. Although this arrangement had not presented problems for all students and classes, a distinct need for a more intensified and structured program - especially for the seriously emotionally and/or behaviorally handicapped was observed.

On several occasions in the past, severely disruptive behaviors have been manifested which seriously hampered normal classroom procedures. Since all Special Education students were previously pooled, mildly and moderately handicapped students were occasionally subjected to extremely disorienting experiences, and victimized by the inclusion of seriously emotionally handicapped students in their classes. The inclusion of a relatively small number of behaviorally handicapped students in typical special classes, consequently, reduced the effectiveness of the total program.

During the school year, a number of seriously emotionally handicapped students were referred for evaluation and identified as needing a highly structured and controlled educational program. These students were in need of a program which emphasized personal adjustment and the development of appropriate interpersonal relationships, as well as academic content. Previous experiences have discouraged the continued placement of these students in existing special classrooms due to the aforementioned complications. On several occasions, Gilbert Public Schools were forced to recommend programs outside of the District due to the inadequacy of existing programs for the seriously emotionally handicapped. Furthermore, a number of students in the general high school population were also in need of more intensive services.

The trend in terms of local District responsibilities has been moving toward a "total funding" concept. In effect, such a concept necessitates complete local funding of students placed outside of the District. Although Gilbert currently provides funding with respect to tuition and transportation, total funding appears destined to include residential placement costs when need arises. The cost of such placements is prohibitively high, and makes the option of a more intensive local effort imperative.

Gilbert Public Schools has a responsibility to provide a free and appropriate education for all District students. Since a number of Gilbert High School students have been identified who are in need of an intensive program, an alternative program has been developed as a means of meeting these needs.

PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

The philosophy of the ADAPT program includes many facets. Initially, as previously mentioned, each student is entitled to a free and appropriate education which is appropriate for individual student's needs. Gilbert High School is committed to providing this education in the broadest sense. Since many students have demonstrated needs which cannot be met exclusively through individual academic content or remediation, we must direct efforts beyond the scope of traditional high school curriculum.

Specifically, we feel that continuous efforts to improve the affective domain of the individual students must be advanced as one of the principal focal points of the program. Furthermore, alternative instructional procedures which emphasize a values approach with academic content material, as well as individual responsibility, independence and commitment must be provided in a highly specialized program.

Academic priorities must be established but many of these students demonstrate that their most pressing needs are in the areas of adjustment, attitude, and interpersonal effectiveness. Generally, maximally effective academic programming cannot be advanced when emotional barriers impede normal information processing.

An additional aspect of the program is to increase the direct community contact and involvement of these students. Frequently, community contacts and field trips prove extremely rewarding and profitable for students - especially students for whom traditional approaches have failed. Since most of these students will be working and living within Arizona communities in the future, the importance of this aspect of the program cannot be overstated.

In summary, the purposes of the proposed program are:

1. To provide a more structured, intensive and individualized program for seriously emotionally handicapped students.
2. To provide a single environment designed to accomodate it's students during as much of the school day as needed--on an individual basis--to a maximum of four class periods.
3. To provide services specifically directed toward the affective needs of the students on a continuous basis.
4. To delineate specific rules, guidelines and consequences regarding a student's interaction at Gilbert High School.
5. To provide quality academic instruction.
6. To utilize alternative instructional procedures which emphasize both content education and a values approach.
7. To utilize the community resource concept extensively in the students program (i.e., more field-based educational experiences).
8. To develop realistic occupational and vocational awareness and preparation.
9. To monitor and evaluate individual student effectiveness in the ADAPT program on a prescribed basis.
10. To educate seriously emotionally handicapped students appropriately at Gilbert High School whenever possible.
11. To provide broad based support involving the home, community and school in educating students.
12. To provide greater control and continuity of the Special Education program in general.
13. To provide an additional educational alternative to outside placements within the Gilbert High School.

IDENTIFICATION AND PLACEMENT

The procedures for referral, evaluation and placement into the ADAPT program are identical to those mandated and adopted for other Special Education programs. Referrals for consideration and possible evaluation are submitted to the counselor, and a pre-evaluation staffing will be held to determine a course of action. In some cases, further evaluation is indicated; in other cases, either existing data is considered adequate, or the referral is treated using alternative means.

Parent consent for evaluation must be obtained prior to any formal evaluation or placement. The evaluation necessarily includes collecting background data, gathering a social history with the parents, direct evaluation of ability, achievement, and processing and specific emphasis on adjustmental and emotional development. Recommendations for placement in the ADAPT program are the responsibility of the multi-disciplinary staffing team as prescribed in the Special Education Rules and Regulations.

Each student has an individual performance contract regarding either earning the right to return to the mainstream or falling out of both the ADAPT program and Gilbert High School. Changes which move students to a less restrictive alternative are done on a trial basis, and are closely monitored by administration and the ADAPT teacher. Specific time frames are adopted for the individual student's monitoring, and included as one of the aspects of the student's individual educational plan (IEP).

EXTENDED RESOURCE MODEL CONSIDERATIONS

It is recognized that the extended resource class for the Emotionally Handicapped requires a joint effort among parents, the Special Education Department, Counseling Department, Psychological Services and Administration. This team is organized to give maximum assistance to each Emotionally Handicapped student. However, the main burden of the class is placed on the classroom teacher and the high school Special Education Department.

Because Emotionally Handicapped children tend to profit most from a program that is carefully planned and systematically structured, the following are included in the model:

I. Characteristics of Teacher/Implementer

A. Objectivity: understanding related concepts in psychology and special education defining educational goals in terms most people can understand, obtaining objective information relevant to successful teaching, and carefully separating one's own needs from those of the pupil. The ability to accept feedback regarding one's teaching is also implied in this characteristic.

B. Flexibility: the ability to shift teaching methods and goals to fit the needs of the learner.

C. Structure: ability to establish as well as maintain reasonable standards for both behavior and academic achievement.

D. Resourcefulness: the ability to develop creative and meaningful approaches to teaching.

E. Social Reinforcement: the ability to give positive approval and attention to students to encourage desirable student behavior.

F. Curriculum Expertise: mastery of both curriculum content and methods appropriate for teaching the emotionally handicapped child.

G. Serving as an appropriate intellectual model. Exemplifying in behavior those intellectual characteristics we wish children to imitate.

II. Teacher Aide Characteristics

A. Similar personality characteristics listed for teacher

B. Maturity

C. Experience working with high school age children

D. A desire to work with the emotionally handicapped adolescent

E. Free of personal and emotional problems

F. Serve as an appropriate academic and social model

G. 1) assist in individualizing instruction by individual tutoring and preparation of instructional materials.
2) assist with classroom management.

(Note: College intern program would be a good source for potential aides.)

III. Classroom Management - components

A. Behavioral frequency count - target behaviors

1) systems for record keeping are established

2) records are kept on each student in class

3) recording is performed daily

B. Motivation

1) reinforcement system - individually based

2) class privileges and rights should be earned

3) establishment of a "Reinforcement Menu."

4) determination of additional reinforcements needed for class

5) Phasing Contracts: The ultimate goal of a special class for emotionally handicapped children is to return them to the regular class as soon as possible. The time required to achieve this varies with each child. The evaluation and placement should project and set goals for returning the child as soon as possible based upon the behavioral and academic evaluations made by the staff. Therefore careful and continuous evaluation is necessary.

6) a system of Monitoring of Behavior after returning the students

IV. The ADAPT program strongly encourages active parents and faculty participation through various aspects of the program. In addition to the traditional parent contact (parent-teacher conferences, etc.) home activities are developed to encourage family participation in counseling, and develop other participation activities.

V. Curriculum Overview

VALUES

Functional and Advanced Math	Individual and Group Counseling	Community Education Concept	Field Trips and Field Education
Vocational Preparation	Art	Current Events	DOE - HERO
Language Arts	Citizenship	Functional Advanced Reading	Performance and Behavior Contracts
Adolescents In Their World	Social Studies	Attendance and Interaction	Recreational Activities
Legal Systems	Situation Dynamics	Independent Projects	English and Communication

VALUES

VALUES

VALUES

VI. Counseling and Affective Elements

As suggested under the curriculum section, the values element of the program is a pervasive aspect of the program. In addition, both individual and group counseling are integral components. In-class group activities, out-of-class group activities, and one-to-one individual counseling is done on a prescribed basis.

The counseling role is an integral part of the curriculum for the EH class. The counseling materials and techniques are implemented to best facilitate communication. Effective communication skills are necessary for an EH student to begin asking for what he wants and needs instead of acting out. One counseling theme is building communication skills for establishing stronger interpersonal relationships.

The counseling department contributes to the overall effectiveness of the EH program. This is achieved by providing services through several different levels. Each of these contains a common element of providing a personal relationship to be incorporated into the total structure of the EH class and in the Special Education Department in general.

Counseling Services

1. Student Services

   A. Personal Relationship
   B. Individual Counseling
   C. Group Counseling
   D. Intervention with family
   E. Facilitator between student-student, student-teacher, student-administrator
   F. Personal growth information
   G. Interpersonal awareness information
   H. Career planning and world of work
   I. Exploring actual job opportunities
      1) META
      2) DVR
      3) Community employer contact
      4) Etc.

2. Teacher Services

   A. Personal relationship
   B. Crisis intervention
   C. Disseminating information about awareness
   D. Giving support
   E. Providing training
   F. Conducting groups
   G. Individual counseling
   H. Family counseling
   I. Testing
      1) Pre-post
      2) Vocational aptitude and interest
      3) Achievement
   J. Getting materials
      1) Self-awareness
      2) Problem solving
      3) Decision making
      4) Career information

3. Family

   A. Provide interpersonal relationship
   B. Offer classes on personal growth and communications
   C. Provide information on emotional handicap
   D. Involve parents with program development
   E. Intervention with parents-students
   F. Intervention with parent-students-authorities

(Note: The counseling services include continual investigation and assessment it needs. Their services listed above are by no means exclusive of other services. It is felt that these services are best provided through the regular curriculum program of the EH class and not solely as a separate unit.)

VII. Class Crediting - The number of credits earned by students will vary according to the number of contracts developed and completed, to a maximum of six credits annually. Contracts for academic credit shall be mutually approved by teacher and principal.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed Extended Cross-Categorical Resource Program is staffed by Mr. Novak. This program is offered in a four-hour block, where students will receive individual contracts for academic courses. The four-hour block also includes the essential element of counseling facilitated by Mr. Runyon.

Program Costs: It is difficult to accurately determine the exact cost of the ADAPT program at this time. There were some initial expenses for materials and supplies. During March, April and May, 1977, the staff worked on curriculum development, out-of-district program observation, student placement, attending workshops, etc. Minimal costs were incurred during these periods.

Facilities: The facilities for the 77-78 school year effectively accomodated the recommended program - no costs or additions.

II. ADAPT: Program evaluation

ADAPT: one year in perspective - a program evaluation

INTRODUCTION

In May, 1977 a proposal and program description regarding ADAPT (Alternative Direction for Adjustment and Personal Training) was submitted to the school board during a work session. The description included information regarding background and need, philosophy and purpose, and identification procedures for an alternative program. Program model considerations, service delivery systems, administrative considerations and provisions for annual program evaluation were also outlined. During the past two weeks, program evaluation information has been collected and organized according to the guidelines submitted in the original proposal. The following represents a summary - both statistical and descriptive - of the ADAPT program outcomes and effects during its first full year of operation.

EVALUATION COMPONENTS

The purpose of the program evaluation is to determine if previously identified needs regarding both students and programs have been met with the addition of ADAPT, the degree to which they have or have not been met, etc. Evaluation of the ADAPT program was accomplished using both objective and subjective data. Specific objective criteria were developed regarding student attitude ratings, parent attitude ratings, attendance differentials, number of days on suspension, number of incidents involving administrative intervention, program evaluation by administration, and program awareness of regular staff. Furthermore, the evaluation included subjective comments - on behalf of staff, students, and parents.

RESULTS

The awareness survey, submitted randomly to approximately 25 regular faculty members, indicated a general lack of awareness of the ADAPT program, it purposes, etc. Seventy-five percent of the staff who returned the questionnaire indicated that they were not aware of the ADAPT program, or indicated very minimal information regarding the program. Within the special education program and the administration, however, the level of awareness regarding the ADAPT program was considered to be very well developed.

The administrative evaluation form considered ADAPT from six basic perspectives: academic aspects of ADAPT, counseling and affective aspects of ADAPT, behavior of ADAPT students, overall operation of the ADAPT program, overall operation of the total special education program, and recommendations for continuance or discontinuance of the program. Based on the administrative evaluation, which included three high school principals and four support personnel, the majority of administrators rated the academic aspects of the ADAPT program as adequate, the counseling and affective aspects as adequate, the behavior of the ADAPT students as improved, the operation of the ADAPT program as improved, the operation of the total special education program as either improved or greatly improved, and 100% of the administrators recommended program continuation. Under the comment

sections, the most frequent positive comments indicated were: 1) being greatly impressed with the overall operation of the special education program - stablization of the program, 2) the provision of a much needed alternative program for students with unique needs, 3) greater control and supervision of students identified as having specific and critical needs, and 4) advancement in personalized education - improved rapport between teachers and students. The most frequently noted areas to be improved were: 1) the need for more out-of-class activities - field experiences and 2) the need for greater organization and structuring of the academic aspects of the ADAPT program, and 3) the need for improving the affective and counseling aspects of the program.

The principal information obtained in the parent questionnaire concerned the district's effort prior to ADAPT, since ADAPT, and total program effectiveness. Before the inception of ADAPT, the majority of the parents surveyed indicated that they were either not satisfied at all or barely satisfied with the efforts made by the school district in educating their child. Since the development of the ADAPT program, all parents surveyed indicated that they are either satisfied, very satisfied, or most satisfied with the efforts of the counseling and special education departments in educating their child. The most frequent comments were regarding the interpersonal effectiveness their students had been developing, complimentary comments toward the teachers and their unique interest in their child as an individual, and general improvement in student interest in attending and participating in school. While parents varied to a great degree regarding their son or daughter's work completion, work on assignments, etc. the results of the parent questionnaire indicated strong support for the efforts made by the school on behalf of their children since the development of the ADAPT program, while being substantially less satisfied with the school's efforts prior to the development of the ADAPT program.

Students' attitudes overall, as predicted, varied greatly regarding their interest and desire to be in the public school setting. Due to the nature and severity of the different cases in the ADAPT program, responses ranged from being totally unhappy in school to being very pleased with the school and the school situation. The most significant comments, however, were derived relating attitude toward teachers, principals, and personal attitudes or adjustments. All ADAPT students responding indicated they felt that their teacher had been either helpful or very helpful in providing them with education. In addition, all students indicated that they felt the high school principals were either interested or very interested in their well-being at the school setting. Based on student reports prior to the ADAPT program, this result proved in marked contrast to the problems, attitudes, and statements of these students prior to the development of the ADAPT program. In other words, although the students varied greatly in their interest in academic materials, etc. substantial progress appears to have been made with the students' attitude toward teachers, administrators, etc. This result was also corroborated in terms of their personal attitude and adjustment while at school. Students indicated that they felt more average or typical in the public school setting than they had in the past.

Data concerning student attendance, suspensions, and disruptive incidents requiring administrative intervention were collected and collated. Due to the fi e which occurred during the past : chool year, many records from prior years were not readily forthcoming. However, records of student performance during the current school year, where available, were obtained and analyzed.

With respect to the number of days spent on suspension, data was collected on three students indicating information before and after their enrollment in ADAPT. Student number one spent seven days during the first semester on suspension, primarily for reasons of attendance, and has spent no days on suspension after this date. Student number two spent ten days on suspension during last year prior to his enrollment in the ADAPT program, and no days on suspension during the present school year while enrolled in ADAPT. While two ADAPT students (not presently enrolled) increased the number of days on suspension, it must be indicated that the ADAPT program was designed to provide an alternative format in which students could earn their way back into the mainstream of school or out of school altogether. In other words, although the school regrets not being able to reach every student through the ADAPT program, the availability and utilization of the program permitted the school to meet a legal responsibility. For these students, the ADAPT program provided a last attempt, a controlled observational and educational setting, and guaranteed the smooth operation of the remaining 990 students at Gilbert High School.

Information and data regarding the number of disruptive incidents requiring administrative intervention similarly produced favorable results. The number of overall disruptive incidents for five target subjects declined from 29 to 12. Once again, however, the figures are somewhat inflated by the inclusion of one of the former ADAPT students who indicated no willingness to participate under any circumstances. Of the total number of disruptive incidents, one student in particular accounted for 75% of the incidents requiring administrative intervention. In other words, since the inclusion of the ADAPT program, high school administration has only been called in on four specific disruptive incidents involving the ADAPT students; during the previous school year, however, the number of required administrative interventions for the same students was significantly and critically higher. The information regarding the disruptive incidents indicates a freeing of the high school administration to become involved in activities other than repeatedly disciplining a relatively small number of students. During the present school year, as indicated by the marked decrease in the number of incidents involving ADAPT students, high school principals have been freed to participate in more pressing administrative functions.

Five ADAPT students, for whom data were available, were used as target students for attendance analysis. The data is summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1*

ADAPT Target Student Attendance Data

	Prior to ADAPT			Since ADAPT			
	Days in attendance	Total possible	Percent attended	Days in attendance	Total possible	Percent attended	Net % change
S_1	141	175	81%	48	57	84%	+ 3%
S_2	53	175	30%	153	157	97%	+67%
S_3	85	110	77%	46	47	98%	+21%
S_4	71	110	65%	39	47	83%	+18%
S_5	55	85	65%	65	72	90%	+25%
			61.8%			92.4%	

Percent improvement in attendance = +30.6%

TABLE 2*

Attendance Rates Projected Over One Year

Before - 61.8% attendance x 177 days x 5 target students x$8.04 daily reimbursement =$4397.32

After - 92.4% attendance x 177 days x 5 target students x$8.04 =$6574.

Net increase state aid =$2177.31

*Criteria for attendance analyzed was the state adopted definition for claiming a student for ADM. Both "excused" and "unexcused" absences were counted. Many of the absences reflected in the table were listed as excused absences. Figures not including $1.30 qualifying tax rate or special education excess cost revenue.

The five students were each in attendance less than 81% of the time, while collectively they were in attendance exactly 61.8% of the total possible days prior to entry into the ADAPT program.

Data obtained from student entry until May 1, 1978 indicate improved attendance for each student, with several students improving dramatically. For ADAPT students with previously identified attedance problems, an overall improvement in attendance rate was calculated to be an impressive 30.6%.

There are two major points illustrated by the raw and tabulated data. First, students - individually and collectively - are attending school more often, are exposed to learning situations more often, and stand to benefit more extensively from their education than previously. Second, from a financial/administrative perspective, the improved student attendance has generated greater

state reimbursement than would be projected without the observed improvement.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gilbert High School's ADAPT program has moved through several phases during the recent school year. The program experienced initial difficulty in becoming established, limited time in terms of staff preparation, and some trial and error activities in order to determine the most efficient and productive program. All staff effected by the ADAPT program agree that the program was certainly not an easy program to implement effectively; however, the same staff universally agree that it has been an extremely worthwhile program. The ADAPT program was developed and implemented at virtually no additional cost to the district over what was projected for the special education budget. The teachers realigned course loads and class assignments in order to accomodate the ADAPT program. As the program has evalved, staff awareness and sophistication, as well as student interest and activity, have, have greatly improved. During the second semester of the present school year, it has become apparent that the ADAPT program model is rapidly becoming a prototype for similar programs throughout the state. The ADAPT program has been presented at two state-wide conventions and has been very well received. Numerous inquiries have been sent to the special services department regarding the ADAPT program, structure, cost, etc. A number of consultants for the Department of Education - Division of Special Education have indicated great interest in the ADAPT program within the special education and administration departments at Gilbert High School.

Probably the single most vital and essential element in the ADAPT program has been the unselfish commitment on the part of all staff members concerned with the ADAPT program. The staff has been committed to developing a quality alternative program at Gilbert High School, and several people have given their time and expertise very unselfishly. Without dedicated personnel, the ADAPT program would have been history after two months of operation; with the commitment and staff dedication, however, the Gilbert High School ADAPT program has evolved to become an effective and essential program for the district.

Due to the nature and severity of the student's problems, considerable variability was evident regarding program effectiveness. In this respect, both individual student's progress and overall program progress were considered to accurately evaluate the program. It should also be stressed that this program does not purport to be the final answer in all cases--it is conceivable that outside placements might still be considered in the most severe cases. The most vital functions of the program are to provide every measure of support possible at the local level, and to exhaust all local means of effectively educating students in the Gilbert Public School system.

The 1978-79 school year should prove to be an extremely productive and effective year for the ADAPT program. With initial growing pains behind us, the program is presently well on track and gaining momentum with each passing week. The results of this evaluation (need for more field trips, improving of the academic aspects of ADAPT, etc.) must be incorporated into our efforts more effectively if the program is to continue to improve. Based on the documented successes of the present school year, and a commitment to provide equality education through the ADAPT program, we recommend the continuation and fortification of the ADAPT program for the coming school year.